



A new gecko of the genus *Tarentola* (Squamata: Gekkonidae) from Eastern Cuba

LUIS M. DÍAZ¹ & S. BLAIR HEDGES²

¹Museo Nacional de Historia Natural de Cuba. Apartado Postal 2349, La Habana 2, CP 10 200. E-mail: lmdiaz@mnhc.inf.cu

²Department of Biology, 208 Mueller Lab, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA 16802, USA. E-mail: sbh1@psu.edu

Abstract

A new, diminutive, and cryptic species of the genus *Tarentola* (*T. crombiei* sp. n.) is described from the arid south coast of Granma, Santiago de Cuba, and Guantánamo provinces in eastern Cuba. Specimens of this species have been in collections for nearly 100 years but its close resemblance to sympatric *Tarentola americana* delayed its detection. It differs from that species in body size, scalation, clutch size, and molecular phylogeny.

Key words: Caribbean, Cryptic species, Lizard, Reptile, Squamata, West Indies

Introduction

The genus *Tarentola* comprises 19 species, and northern Africa is the center of diversity. In the New World, *Tarentola* only occurs in the West Indies (Schwartz, 1968; Schwartz and Henderson, 1991). *Tarentola americana* Gray (1831) is endemic to Cuba (*Tarentola a. americana*), and the Bahamas (*T. a. warreni*). The largest (and probably extinct) member of the genus, *T. albertschwartzi*, was recently described from Jamaica (Sprackland and Swinney, 1998); the only known specimen was discovered in the collection of the National Museums of Scotland. *Tarentola americana* was placed in a different subgenus (*Neotarentola*) by Joger (1984), and the degree of genetic divergence from the Old World lineages also supported that placement (Carranza *et al.* 2000, Weiss and Hedges, 2007).

In March, 1987, S.B.H. found unusually small, sexually mature individuals of the normally large species *Tarentola americana* on the U.S. Naval Base at Guantánamo Bay in southeastern Cuba. In the following year, Ronald Crombie also collected specimens of the small form on the Naval Base and observed that there were associated differences in scalation between it and *T. americana*. In 1990, on a joint expedition of the National Museum of Natural History (Havana), University of Havana, and Pennsylvania State University, S.B.H. and others encountered the small form at several localities west of the Naval Station: Loma Redonda and 3.9 km N. Hatibonico, Guantánamo Province, and the south side of Laguna Baconao, Santiago de Cuba Province. Subsequently, in 2001 and later, L.M.D. and others encountered the small form at those and nearby localities, and at an additional locality to the east (Río Jauco, Maisí) in the arid coastal zone of southeastern Cuba. L.M.D. and S.B.H. also discovered additional specimens in museum collections dating back to the early twentieth Century, including some which originally were noted as being unusually small (Barbour and Ramsden, 1919). Morphological comparisons, ecological observations, and molecular data (Weiss and Hedges, 2007) provided evidence that those small specimens belong to an undescribed species. Here, we describe these differences and name the new species.